

Claims

1. Image data processing apparatus, comprising a plurality of image processing systems in which each of said image processing systems has direct access to a respective frame storage means; and

a network connecting said image processing systems together so as to allow each connected image processing system to indirectly access the frame storage means of the other connected image processing systems; wherein

each image processing system includes a local configuration file specifying details of its respective locally connected storage means,

a network configuration data structure, and

network communication means; wherein, said network communication means is arranged to

transmit details of its associated configuration file to other networked image systems, and to

add configuration data to its associated network configuration data structure in response to configuration details received from other networked image processing systems.

2. Apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said data processing systems are based around a silicon graphics O₂, Octane or Onyx2 computer.

3. Apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said data storage systems include a plurality of disks configured to receive image stripes.

4. Apparatus according to claim 3, including redundant disks to provide data security.

5 5. Apparatus according to claim 4, wherein said disks are configured as a redundant array of inexpensive disks (RAID).

6. Apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said network includes a high bandwidth switching means.

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7. Apparatus according to claim 6, wherein said high bandwidth switching means is a fibre channel switch.

8. Apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said network communication means is an Ethernet network.

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9. Apparatus according to claim 1, including a local disk drive, wherein said configuration data is stored on said local disk drive.

20 10. Apparatus according to claim 1, including the high bandwidth fibre channel switch and a low bandwidth Ethernet, wherein image data is transferred over said high bandwidth fibre channel switch and said configuration data is transferred over said Ethernet.

25 11. A method of automatically writing network configuration data structures in a networked image data processing environment, including a

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plurality of image processing systems in which each of said image processing systems has direct access to a respective frame storage means, wherein each image processing system includes a local configuration file specifying details of its respective locally connected storage means, a network
5 configuration data structure, and network communication means; and a network connecting said image processing systems together so as to allow each connected image processing system to indirectly access the frame storage means of the other connected image processing systems; wherein said method performs the steps of:

10 transmitting details of system configuration data to other networked processing systems, and

adding configuration data to a local network configuration data structure in response to configuration details received from other networked image processing systems.

15 **12.** A method according to claim 11, configured for execution upon a silicon graphics O₂, Octane or Onyx2 computer.

20 **13.** A method according to claim 11, wherein image frames are divided into a plurality of stripes and said stripes are directed to respective disk storage devices.

25 **14.** A method according to claim 13, including a process of generating redundant data and supplying said redundant data to a redundant disk thereby providing a degree of security.

15. A method according to claim 14, wherein said disks are arranged as a redundant array of inexpensive disks (RAID).

5 16. A method according to claim 11, wherein said network includes a high bandwidth switching means.

10 17. A method according to claim 16, wherein said high bandwidth switching means is a fibre channel switch.

18. A method according to claim 11, wherein said network communication means is an Ethernet network.

15 19. A method according to claim 11, wherein said configuration data is stored on a local disk drive.

20 20. A method according to claim 11, wherein image data is transferred over a high bandwidth fibre channel switch and configuration data is transferred over an Ethernet network.

21. A computer readable medium having computer readable instructions executable by a computer such that, when executing said instructions, a computer will perform the steps of:

25 transmitting details of configuration data to other computer systems executing similar instructions and

upon receiving transmitted configuration data from another system,
adding said configuration data to a local network configuration data structure.

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